

Edgar Wells House
(Chapline Street Row Historic District)
2301-2303 Chapline Street
Wheeling
Ohio County
West Virginia

HABS No. WV-195

HABS
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

EDGAR WELLS HOUSE

HABS No. WV-195

Location: 2301 and 2303 Chapline Street
Wheeling, Ohio County, West Virginia.

Present Owners: Mary N. Bryan and John D. Storch.

Present Occupants: Joseph Bryan, John D. Storch.

Present Use: Two-family dwelling.

Significance: This house was built by Edgar Wells, a local builder-architect associated with the firm of Klieves, Kraft and Company. Erected about 1889, it reflects Wells' fondness for rich decorative detailing and is an architecturally eclectic composition. Evidence indicates that this house was originally designed to be a two-family structure.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1889-90 The 1889-90 City and County Land Book of Ohio County recorded that a building had been recently added which increased the value of the lot by \$5,160.00.
2. Architect: Probably Edgar Wells.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Wells House was built on the north one-half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition, Webster District of Wheeling. The following references to the Title of this lot are found in the Ohio County, West Virginia Deed Books.

1866 Deed, 22 September, recorded in Deed Book 50, page 522. William Kraft and wife to Nancy Moore \$2,000.00 for all of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition.

1886 Deed, 1 April, recorded in deed Book 78, page 90. Nancy Moore to Edgar Wells and wife \$3,000.00 for north one-half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition.

1890 Edgar Wells died 7 May intestate, leaving as his sole heirs-at-law his wife Jennie E., and four children including Robert E. Wells and Lydia O. Wells. Each held and received 1/5 interest in the property on the north one-half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition.

- 1903 Deed of Trust, 29 October, recorded in Deed of Trust Book 68, page 419. Robert E. Wells and wife and Jennie E. Wells to George E. Boyd, Jr. \$1,000.00 promissory note at 6% per annum on one fifth interest in the north one half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition.
- 1910 Deed, 3 August, recorded in Deed Book 135, page 67. George E. Boyd, Jr. to Henry Grundling \$1,550.00 for undivided one fifth interest in the north one half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition.
- 1910 Deed, 3 August, recorded in Deed Book 135, page 68. Henry Grundling to Lydia O. Wells, Arch B. Wells, Harry W. Wells and Martha Pryor Chapline and Eoff Addition.
- 1911 Deed, 22 March, recorded in Deed Book 137, page 48. Lida O. Wells et al to W. H. Riley and wife South one half of the north one half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff (2303 Chapline Street). "The northern boundary line of the property hereby conveyed is a line running through the center of the partition wall between the dwellings on the north half of said lot numbered one hundred fifty six (156), and said partition wall is to be used in common between the owners of the said dwellings."
- 1913 Deed, 29 May, recorded in Deed Book 143, page 505. W. H. Riley and wife to August C. Meyer South one half of the north one half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition (2303 Chapline Street).
- 1918 Will, probated, 2 February, recorded in Will Book 12, page 124. August C. Meyer devised to his children: Ray J. Meyer and Irene M. Meyer, son, Ray, named Executor and directed to "sell my property, No. 2303 Chapline Street".
- 1920 Deed, 14 April, recorded in Deed Book 170, page 494. Ray J. Meyer and wife to Joseph Gehring and wife south one half of the north one half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition (2303 Chapline Street).
- 1922 Joseph Gehring died intestate 18 December, 1922 leaving five children including Francis L. Gehring as his sole heirs-at-law. His wife, Emilia, died intestate, 10 October, 1941.
- 1945 Deed, 13 February, recorded in Deed Book 279, page 43. Francis L. Gehring et al to John D. Storch and wife and William J. Bryan south one half of the north one half of Lot 156. Chapline and Eoff Addition (2303 Chapline Street).

1958 Deed, 5 July, recorded in Deed Book 410, page 160. William J. Bryan to Mary Bryan. One half interest in south one half of the north one half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition (2303 Chapline Street).

Title for 2301 Chapline Street (North one half of north one half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition).

1911 Deed, 6 May recorded in Deed Book 137, page 306. Lida O. Wells et al to August C. Meyer North one half of the north one-half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition. (2301 Chapline Street)

1918 Will, probated 2 February, recorded in Will Book 12, page 124. August C. Meyer devised to his children Roy J. Meyer and Irene M. Meyer, son Ray, named executor.

1920 Deed, 14 April, recorded in Deed Book 170, page 493. Roy J. Meyer to Freda F., Josephine and Anna Meintel north one half of north one-half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition (2301 Chapline Street).

1944 Deed, 13 September, recorded in Deed Book 276, page 387. Freda F., Josephine and Anna Meintel to Anna E. Koen North one half of north one half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition.

1944 Deed, 27 September, recorded in Deed Book 314, page 141. Anna E. Koen to Eugene K. Koen North one half of the north one half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition (2301 Chapline Street).

1949 Deed, 23 December, recorded in Deed Book 320, page 324. Eugene K. Koen to William Bryan, Jr. North one half of the north one half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition (2301 Chapline Street).

1958 Deed, 5 July, recorded in Deed Book 410, page 162. William Bryan, Jr. to Mary N. Bryan North one half of the north one half of Lot 156, Chapline and Eoff Addition (2301 Chapline Street).

4. Original plans, construction, etc: Not known.

5. Alterations, additions, etc.: Changes to the original structure of this two-family house appear to be primarily the product of modernization. The mantels, trims, stair rails and newels have not been altered.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure:

Edgar W. Wells a local builder-architect erected this two family structure in 1889. Wells was born in 1850 and studied at Bethany College. While at Bethany College, he took a six month training program in drawing and civil engineering. Upon completion of this program he worked for three years with his father, who was a carpenter. In 1874 Wells moved to Wheeling where he was first associated with Charles P. Hamilton in stairbuilding. After a time he joined the planing firm of Klieves, Kraft and Company as journeyman.

Edgar Wells worked for four years for Klieves, Kraft and Company. During that time he gave "much study during leisure hours to architecture."¹ His skill as an architect brought him much renown, and "he was compelled to open an office and employ assistants."² Klieves, Kraft and Company made Wells a partner of their firm. His work became a regular part of the firm's business. He is attributed with having furnished the designs and superintended the erection of the following buildings: North Wheeling Public School Building, Island and Eighth Ward School Buildings, The Young Men's Christian Association Building, Rogers Building, Peter Welz Building, L. C. Stifel's block, Schenck's Building, the Female College of Buckhannon, Ravenswood School and the residences of Dr. Hazlett, George E. Stifel, Alfred Paull, Dr. Ackermann, Lawrence Sands, and R. K. Giffens.³

On May 7, 1890 Edgar Wells died in an accident on the Ohio River. The Wheeling Daily Intelligencer of Thursday, May 8, 1890 commented on his early demise in the following obituary: "In the death of Mr. E. W. Wells, of this city, by drowning yesterday, the city not only loses a valued citizen, a competent architect, but a man who was a credit to any community for uprightness and generous impulses. It is true that we are here today and absent tomorrow, but when a man of Mr. Well's position is taken from the full flush of life and a future of usefulness in a twinklin of an eye, then the shock is greater on account of its being unexpected. In every sense Wheeling has sustained a loss, and the Intelligencer assures the widow and the fatherless children that they have the deepest sympathy in their inconsolable bereavement."⁴

Edgar Wells' widow continued to own the entire property, living with her children in the 2303 Chapline Street house and renting out the 2301 Chapline house. Mrs. Wells' children sold the property separately, and from that time forward there was dual ownership of this two-family house.

1. Anonymous. History of Upper Ohio Valley, p. 469.
2. Ibid.
3. Anonymous. History of Upper Ohio Valley, p. 470.
4. Wheeling Daily Intelligencer, Thursday, May 8, 1890.

C. Sources of Information

Anonymous. History of the Upper Ohio Valley, with Family History and Biographical Sketches. Madison, Wisconsin: Brant and Fuller, 1890.

Wheeling Daily Intelligencer, Thursday, May 8, 1890.

Prepared by: Candace Reed
Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
September, 1976

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This large three-story corner residence was built in 1889-90 under one ownership. It has since been divided into two residences. Of particular note are the large pedimented window openings, high corner turret and corbeled brickwork.
2. Condition of fabric: Generally poor.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Rectangular; approximately thirty feet wide by sixty-five feet deep; three stories plus basement.
2. Foundations: Coursed stone.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The walls are red brick laid in running bond.
4. Structural system: Masonry bearing walls with wooden spanning members.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc: The front entry stoops of both sections are elevated two steps and slightly recessed into the wall. There is a first floor covered frame porch at the rear of each section.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The house was originally constructed as one residence but was divided into two separate residences with the addition of a partition in 1911. It appears from the plan, however, that the house was always in two general parts. Each side is basically the

same with an entry foyer to the left and a living space opening off to the right. Each section has a stairway directly at the end of the foyer and two additional rooms, back to back at the rear of the houses. The front section of each house has three stories, accessible from the central stairs, while the back section has only two floors. Each section also has a basement, but these were inaccessible.

2. Stairways: Stairs for both numbers 2301 and 2303 are located in the same relationship for each residence. There is an open stairway to the upper floors at the rear of the foyer. A stair to the basement is located between the two rear rooms in each section.
3. Flooring: The floors are wooden, and although for the most part original, they have been covered with carpet, linoleum and other flooring materials.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted plaster.
5. Doors and doorways: There are two sets of original double pocket doors in each of the front rooms of the residences. There are no other doors of significance.
6. Special decorative features: None of particular note, although trim of most windows and doors is original.
7. Mechanical equipment: Modern.

D. Site and Surroundings:

The house sits prominently on the southwest corner of 23rd and Chapline Streets. The front elevation faces slightly south of east. A wide sidewalk, extending around the east and north facades of the building, is paved with various patterns of brick and tile.

Prepared by: John McRae
Architectural Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
September, 1976

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth L. Anderson, HABS Principal Architect, in cooperation with the Friends of Wheeling, Inc. The measured drawings were made during the summer of 1976 under the supervision of John M. McRae (University of Florida) with architectural technicians Mark L. Hall, Foreman, (Pennsylvania State University); Edward C. Freeman (Arizona State University); Ruthie D. Wiley (Mississippi State University); Alan G. Wilig (City College of New York); and Architectural Historian Candace Reed (George Washington University). The photographs were taken in 1977 by HABS Photographer Jack E. Boucher.

ADDENDUM TO:

EDGAR WELLS HOUSE

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